

EPA Region 5 – *Partners for Asthma Action* Recognition
Greater Cleveland Asthma Coalition's (GCAC)
"Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative" (AFSI)

Background: GCAC was organized in 1997 with the AFSI beginning in Jan. 2004. In the fall of 2003, the GCAC reviewed national asthma recommendations and decided to focus on creating an asthma-friendly community. This decision was made because GCAC members recognized the need to create a more comprehensive approach to asthma management in a defined target area. In the past, asthma programs have typically been offered as "stand-alone" ventures in various communities throughout Greater Cleveland. While these programs showed modest success, it was clear that a multi-component approach in a defined community would be more effective. AFSI is a component of all GCAC committee work, however, the majority of activities implemented are with the guidance of the Education and Steering committees.

Research showed that the best place to begin planning an asthma-friendly community was in the schools. Therefore, the Coalition applied for and received an AFSI grant in January of 2004 from the American Lung Association and Kaiser Permanente.

Partners: The major partners for the AFSI are the American Lung Association of Ohio, the Cleveland Municipal School District (including individual schools, District Health Services, parent teacher organizations), Environmental Health Watch, local physicians, and the St. Luke's Foundation. Through this current St. Luke's funding, the Coalition is developing written asthma policies and procedures for the entire district and will provide in-service education.

Goals: The GCAC's goals include to: (1) Continue to sustain the AFSI funding, support, and activities; (2) Obtain health outcomes data; (3) Implement written, district-wide asthma policies and procedures; and, (4) Enforce the district wide-policies and procedures.

Challenges: Start-up challenges included: (1) Needs assessment completion – Highly desired to have had more individuals complete the school needs assessment survey; (2) Planning for an overwhelmed environment – It has been challenging to plan in a large district, even for a few schools, because the environment is constantly changing due to social, economic, and environmental factors; (3) Identifying and tracking students with asthma - A more efficient way is needed to identify and track students with asthma. Nurse reporting underestimated the number of children and a survey over-estimated. A survey, follow-up phone calls, & records search (emergency card, medication log) were time-consuming. Recommendations include "scannable" health cards which could reduce time-consuming data entry and/or determining if professional health students could assist with data entry (with consideration of privacy laws). The district's computer system is not capable of tracking students and school personnel do not have the time to record this information; and, (4) Determining local asthma policies and procedures - Asthma policies and procedures vary widely across the district and schools, thus making it difficult to determine our activities.

Current challenges include: (1) Obtaining health outcomes data – Difficult to determine if reductions in school health office visits, absences, hospitalizations, emergency department use, etc. have been made due to AFSI. Currently working with a professor of nursing who is hoping to secure funds to hire someone to track this data for the school district; (2) Coordinating school, family, and community efforts - As a solution, AFSI received funding to create written, district-wide asthma policies and procedures and in-service education; and, (3) Sustaining project activities

Key Drivers and Program Areas: GCAC has committed leaders and champions through its diverse membership including health care providers, public health professionals, school employees, environmental specialists, housing specialists, legislators, community members and individuals with asthma. It has high performing collaborations and partnerships, especially taking into account its small budget and staff. GCAC recognizes the importance of including environmental interventions in the schools, and EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools (IAQ TfS) has been a component of the AFSI. Every custodian (about 89) in the District has been trained in IAQ TfS. In addition, through the Cleveland & Cuyahoga County Healthy Homes Initiative (funded by HUD), asthma triggers have been reduced in over 100 peoples homes. ALA's Asthma Educator Institute has trained over 80 Cleveland health care professionals. Sustaining the AFSI has been successful through major

partner organizations like the District, the city and county health departments, local physicians, a local environmental group, families and the GCAC as a whole. Since the initial funding from the ALA and Kaiser Permanente, GCAC has secured funding support from CDC, the Cleveland Department of Public Health/CDC Steps to a Healthier US funds, and a local foundation (St. Luke's Foundation). The following outcomes have been recognized: increased community collaboration and communication around asthma; increased knowledge of students with asthma; increased student asthma knowledge (from 71 to 86%) through Open Airways; increased professional asthma knowledge (from 55 to 80%) through Asthma Educator Institute; decreased asthma triggers in schools and homes (IAQ TfS & Healthy Homes); and, increased asthma awareness among students, staff and parents (Asthma 101).

Lessons Learned and Recommendations: (1) A more efficient way is needed to identify students with asthma. (2) Open Airways for Schools was successful in statistically increasing children's asthma knowledge. (3) Tracking students with asthma is critical to show the success of the program and for sustainability. (4) District-wide written asthma policies and procedures are necessary to improve staff, student and parent communication, education and awareness. (5) Potentially incentivize Asthma Educator Institute participants (especially District nurses) to take the national certification exam.

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